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ABSTRACT

Describing a 1978 demonstration program of the school board of Broward County, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, this paper lists strategies developed by the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design Program. The two basic aims of the program were to reduce opportunities for crime created by school building structure and the layout of school grounds and to change student and staff attitudes toward crime. Strategies rated the most valuable were (1) a police/school precinct instituted in the school that officers used as headquarters when not responding to a call; (2) bicycle compounds; (3) secure, locked parking lots; (4) painting of murals by students to discourage building defacement; (5) miniplazas landscaped by students to discourage building and grounds damage; and (6) two-way radios for instant communication among key personnel. After the program was instituted, student concern about being a victim decreased somewhat from the previous year. (Author/JM)

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STRATEGIES INVOLVING STUDENTS AND TEACHERS IN SCHOOL SECURITY

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American public education faces a crisis: It is one of learning, of crime, and, all too often, of funding. In many schools, the crisis in crime is a major influencing factor on the other two, for crime is a major impediment to learning and an increasingly important factor in school budgeting.

Most schools are not equipped to handle the serious problems created by crime -- a conclusion shared by the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency, under the chairmanship of Senator Birch Bayh. In its hearings, the Subcommittee discussed various strategies designed to provide long-range solutions rather than short-term emergency treatment. These solutions were set forth in a document released by the Subcommittee in July, 1976, entitled School Violence and Vandalism: Models and Strategies for Change. Among the most important concepts presented were:

> School security personnel properly trained and educationally oriented, first, to control problems once they arise and, additionally, to institute programs to avoid critical situations in the future.
>
> Security programs carefully designed to meet the individual needs of a school to help reduce vandalism costs due to arson, intrusions, or theft during periods when the building is not occupied.

There were many responses to the Senate Subcommittee's findings. One of the most responsive was the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) which funded various programs dealing with school crime. One of its major involvements was in a project known as CPTED, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design.

LEAA awarded a grant to the Westinghouse National Issues Center to study four different areas with a view to developing programs to make them less conducive to crime. The project was known as CPTED, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design. The four areas selected were neighborhoods, commercial properties, transportation and schools. A demonstration was scheduled in each of the areas for the purpose of developing a program that could be adapted to situations throughout the country.

The School Board of Broward County, at Fort Lauderdale, Florida, was selected for the CPTED school demonstration. Matching funds were provided by the School Board and the Florida Commissioner of Education for the project which was completed on June 30, 1978.

The two basic aims of the CPTED school demonstration were, first, to reduce opportunities for crime that often are inherent in the structure of school buildings and the layout of school grounds and, second, to promote changes in attitudes among the students and staff. By reducing the apparent opportunity for crime, students and staff would be less

fearful of moving freely about their school environment. The assumption underlying these aims was that physical changes could have their maximum impact on crime and the fear of crime only when the users of the school environment actively supported and maintained the environmental changes and aided in the detection and reporting of crimes.

CPTED included such design changes as the addition of alarm systems, supplemented by changes in landscape features, classroom, office and school grounds layout, and even such items as stairwells, doors and walls. Added to the notion of design changes were changes in people's reaction to their environment, changes sometimes created by environmental design, sometimes by administrative action. CPTED incorporated physical, social, law enforcement and management techniques in a combination strategy designed to reduce the opportunities for crime which are often inherent in the structure and organization of school systems. It involved close cooperation between local law enforcement agencies, school organizations and individuals at all levels.

The demonstration involved the implementation of various strategies at four different high schools with a view to making them less conducive to crime. In addition, a model school security program, including guidelines for reporting school crime, were delivered to LEAA.

The changes made in the demonstration high schools incorporate four major objectives which are a part of all CPTED programs. These objectives are access control, natural surveillance, activity support and motivation reinforcement.

Before implementing the strategies, a fear study was conducted in all of the twenty high schools to ascertain the students' concerns so that strategies could be effected to allay their fears. The results showed that there was a twenty percent fear factor among the students mainly relating to isolated or hidden areas and restrooms. It was interesting to note that at that same time a national TV presentation on violence and vandalism found the same percentage of the crime fear factor in neighborhoods throughout the country.

Some of the strategies included the following:

1. Bicycle compounds (secure and nonsecure) - Bicycle parking areas were designed to provide levels of security consistent with variable access needs of students.

    a. Secure - A locked, fenced area outside the school which is only opened at the beginning and the end of the school day for students attending the full day.

    b. Nonsecure - An open, paved area located inside the school grounds with bicycle racks for locking bicycles with individual students' locks so parttime students may enter and exit as their schedules permit.

2. Alarm System - To protect school facilities and equipment from vandalism and theft during non-school hours.

3. Mini-Plazas - Created attractive outdoor meeting place within the school grounds in unused areas by installing benches and tables for snacks and informal gatherings with the landscaping being done by horticultural students under the direction of the landscape architect.

4. External Stairwell Alteration - Seal off the open area under bottom stairwell to eliminate scene of frequent crimes.

5. Graphic Art - Students, under direction of art teacher, painted murals on the walls of the school to discourage vandalism and to identify the areas, such as the gymnasium, science laboratory, bandroom, library, etc., through the wall paintings.

6. Lockers - Lockers were painted a different color for each grade to facilitate detecting unauthorized students and outsiders in the locker room.

7. Parking Lots -

   a. Fenced -

      i. Secure Area - Locked during the day.

      ii. Nonsecure Area - Students enter and exit as schedule permits.

   b. Gates - Located at vehicular access points to control access, to clearly define transitional zones, to reroute ingress and egress during specified periods and to provide natural surveillance.

8. Police/School Precinct - A portable was constructed at one school, part of a three-school complex, and used by the local police agency as a precinct to provide twenty-four hour natural police surveillance and to effect a closer understanding relationship between the officers, students and school personnel.

9. Two-Way Portable Radios - These were provided to key school personnel to overcome distance and isolation problems on large campuses by creating rapid response when needed and to provide more effective surveillance.

10. Queuing Lanes/Snack Bar - To control snack bar traffic and to provide natural surveillance.

11. Bus Loading Area and Queuing - Separated busing students from parking lot students and provided orderly loading of buses.

12. Restrooms - Entrance doors locked in open position during school day, with retaining wall assuring privacy, removed obstacles to natural surveillance, decreased fear of use, increased the use and increased the risk of detection.

13. Student/Faculty Committee - Assisted in design, coordination and implementation of various strategies.

All of the strategies were completed during the 1977-78 school year so a statistical evaluation could not be made until completion of the 1978-79 school year. However, an independent evaluation during May and June of 1978 consisting of interviews of students and teachers at the four high schools indicated that -

Student concern over being a victim of crime was quite high, but the concern had decreased from the previous year;

Almost nine out of ten students said that their concern for the well-being of fellow students had either stayed the same or increased relative to the last school year;

Resource persons, stationed at high schools to handle safety and security, were rated highly by students and teachers;

The most highly rated strategies in the order of their preference were:

1. Police/School Precinct
2. Bicycle Compounds
3. Parking Lot
4. Murals
5. Mini-Plazas
6. Two-Way Radios

1. Police/School Precinct - The precinct, consisting of a portable, was located in front of one of the high schools taking part in the CPTED demonstration, which school is part of a three-school complex, the others being a middle school and an elementary school.

The original concept of the Police/School Precinct came as a result of working with the police agency covering that school complex. Arrangements were made whereby the officers covering that area had access to a room in the middle school in which was

located a telephone and typewriter. When not responding to a call, they would come by the complex and use the telephone to make any necessary calls and the typewriter to start typing up incidents that they had already handled on their shift. With their two-way portable radios they were in continuous communication with their dispatcher.

This arrangement brought the patrol car and officers by the complex during nonschool hours at unscheduled times and completely discouraged vandalism and break-ins at the complex, particularly by youngsters.

Under CPTED the Precinct was used twenty-four hours a day by the police officers for their shift changes and by the officers assigned to that area. As reflected in the evaluation, it created a safe and secure feeling for students and teachers during the day and continued to deter vandalism and theft during the nonschool hours. Most importantly it effected a closer relationship between police officers, students and educators and a clearer understanding and appreciation of each others role in the community.

Since its inception under CPTED the Police/School Precinct's use has been expanded to house a Truancy Specialist, who handles all truants picked up in that area and a Police Juvenile Specialist who handles all juveniles picked up by the police in that area.

2. Bicycle Compounds - Bicycle theft has become a major problem for school districts throughout the country.

Elementary and middle schools do not present much of a problem since the students attend school for the entire day and their bicycles can be locked up in a secure area.

High schools, however, cannot be handled that simply. These campuses are similar to colleges and universities today with students coming and going all through the school day.

Under CPTED, secure and nonsecure compounds were installed. The secure compound outside the school is completely fenced in and locked for the entire school day. It houses the bicycles, motorcycles and mopeds of students who are attending classes for the entire day. The nonsecure compound is located within the school grounds which creates a natural surveillance by school personnel and discourages anyone from attempting to steal them because they would be easily detected. These students, using their own locks and chains, secure their bicycles in these racks so that they can leave the school whenever they have completed their classes.

No longer do we have bicycles chained to outside fences, posts and trees where they were the easy prey of professional thieves and also amateurs since they were far removed from any type of observation.

3. Parking Lot - Nothing upsets a student more than to have his gas siphoned, his tires removed, his car vandalized, his tape deck or CB stolen and sometimes his car stolen. Nothing concerns a principal more than these incidents, as well as fights and reported drug activity in the parking lots.

   Since a majority of these problems are caused by outsiders, control of the users through CPTED strategies greatly curtailed the incidents and relieved the anxieties of the students and principal.

4. Murals - It's interesting how you value or treat something you earned or created yourself as compared to something that was given to you or done for you. That was the reaction to the murals being painted on the walls of the school by the students themselves under the direction of their art teacher. In one school where defacing and damaging walls had almost become an extracurricular activity, that practice completely stopped with the painting of the murals on the walls. Not one of them has as much as been scratched since it was painted. In addition, they have helped in the orderly flow of between-class traffic since the gym, the library, the music room, the science labs and the media centers are now easily located.

5. Mini-Plazas - The mini-plazas were located in unused space within the school and have enhanced the appearance of the area mainly due to the horticultural work done by the students.

   Students who bring their lunch or use the snack bar now have a beautiful and relaxing area in which they enjoy their lunch. Students who ate in the cafeteria and then congregated in the parking lot or drifted into the surrounding neighborhood, now assemble in the mini-plazas before returning to class.

   Again, the attitude of the students toward the horticultural work is the same as the murals. No damage has been done to the sodding, the flowers, the plants, the shrubbery or the trees in the mini-plazas and I'm convinced it's because it was done by the students themselves.

6. Two-Way Radios - In one of the demonstration schools, with a forty acre campus, key personnel were equipped with two-way radios. One of the people involved was the principal's secretary and she served as the base operator so that the principal could be in touch with his key people at all times.

   The radios not only created an immediate contact with and response by key personnel, but they also served as a deterrent to potential disruptive students and outsiders. They have proven invaluable in the handling of students during bomb threat and fire drill evacuations.

   Within two weeks after the two-way radio system was installed, a young man in his early twenties, who had stabbed a woman to death three blocks from the school, took refuge in the school since he could easily have been accepted as a student. The police traced him to the school and gave his physical and clothing description to the principal who passed them along on the two-way radios to his key personnel. Within two minutes he had been spotted by a school employee and taken into custody by the police, preventing what could have been a very serious situation.

   As a result of the CPTED radio strategy, today all twenty high schools have supplied their key personnel with two-way radios.

The model school security program, authored by Mr. Grealy, was delivered to LEAA in June, 1978. It was prepared to assist school administrators by offering suggestions for dealing with the problems of crime and for preventing them in the future. Directed at administrators, security directors and all individuals involved in school security, these guidelines for the organization, staffing and administration of a school security program also outline the establishment of a school crime reporting system.

The document was prepared with the needs of the schools in mind. It can be used as a working tool for developing an integrated school security system where none exists, or it can be used for evaluating existing problems and procedures. It also can serve as a guide for working with local law enforcement personnel. While the guidelines generally detail what can and should be done, it remains for the school administration to tailor the security program to the specific needs and resources of of the individual school.